

Colorado Youth Leadership Project

Brief Program Description

The problem of substance abuse and risk factors associated with substance abuse among secondary students in Colorado has been well documented. The Colorado Youth Leadership Project (CYLP) was developed to address identifiable drug risk factors through school-based program components. The project was designed to (1) reduce factors in the individual, peer group, and in the school (i.e., school drop-out risk due to academic failure or antisocial behavior) that place students at high risk for using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and (2) increase the resiliency/protective factors within students and peer groups (i.e., academic performance, life management skills, peer relationships, school and community bonding, and involvement in positive, drug-free recreational activities) so that there is a reduction in the likelihood that students will use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Program Strategies

The intervention included six major components that were designed to help high-risk youth become more resilient and avoid using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The components included (1) Life Skills Class and Peer Group, (2) Academic Tutoring and Computer Skills, (3) Youth Leadership Training and Leadership Council, (4) Adventure Challenge activities, (5) Service Learning activities at school and in the community, and (6) Student Portfolios. A summer leadership program was also held.

Population Focus

Participants are at-risk seventh graders in Middle school.

Suitable Settings

This is a school-based project.

Required Resources

Project ALERT Curriculum and the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum, both nationally validated curricula, were used in the Life Skills component of CYLP.

Implementation Timeline

The Colorado Youth Leadership Project lasted four years.

Outcomes

Major program outcomes included:

- Participants demonstrated greater awareness from pre- to post-test on the perceived harm of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, inhalants, and tobacco (smoking and chewing).
- Teachers reported positive changes in the CYLP students including improved attendance and work ethic, increased self-confidence, improved attitude toward school, increased sense of responsibility, and improved self-esteem.
- With respect to alcohol use, treatment students scored significantly lower than comparison students at post-test in alcohol use during the last 30 days.
- Students in the treatment group had significantly lower post-test scores than comparison students for both marijuana use during the last 30 days and marijuana use during the past 12 months.

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Contact Information

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

Program Developer

Kathleen J. Zavela, Ph.D.

Professor

Department of Community Health and Nutrition

University of Northern Colorado

501 20th Street

Campus Box 93

Greeley, CO 80639

Phone: (970) 351-1516

Fax: (970) 351-1489

Email: kathy.zavela@unco.edu